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# The Contributions of Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk to Mariology after Vatican II

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# THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LEO CARDINAL SCHEFFCZYK TO MARIOLOGY AFTER VATICAN II

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*Fr. Emery de Gaál, PhD*

## 1. Introduction: Scheffczyk's Theological *Œuvre*

The shortest way to introduce Leo Scheffczyk (1920–2005) to an American theological audience is probably to state that he is “the European Avery Dulles.” Such a generalization is incorrect and yet contains a kernel of truth.<sup>1</sup> At the same consistory in 2001, both master theologians were created cardinals by St. John Paul II. It is also most indicative of their contributions to theology that this date coincided with the 200th birthday of Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801–90), who informed their thinking in central ways. Incidentally, this was also Scheffczyk's eighty-first birthday. In addition, both were prolific writers.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Lutz, *Theologie in der Kirche. Eine Untersuchung der methodologischen Grundlagen der Theologie und des Verständnisses der Katholizität bei Avery Kardinal Dulles und bei Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2010).

Scheffczyk's motto as cardinal indicates the breadth of his theological vision: "Evangelizare investigabiles divitias Christi" (Eph 3:8).

Until his death, Scheffczyk had authored no less than 1,450 titles.<sup>2</sup> Of these, more than 200 are devoted to Marian topics. It is important and beneficial for Mariologists the world over to engage this theologian, as he is considered the post-conciliar "Nestor of German-language Mariology."<sup>3</sup> During the post-conciliar "Marian ice-age"—thus the great precursor of ecumenical dialogue Cardinal Lorenz Jaeger (1892–1975)<sup>4</sup>—Scheffczyk was a stalwart of Marian theology and spirituality.

For the last fifty years Mariology—as well as spirituality, pneumatology and theology of grace—is no longer taught at the overwhelming majority of departments of Catholic theology in central Europe. However, as the figure of Mary was receded into the background, the figure

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<sup>2</sup> Anton Ziegenaus, "'Den unergründlichen Reichtum Christi verkündigen' (Eph 3,8) Würdigung der Person und des Werkes Leo Kardinal Scheffczyks," in *Forum Katholische Theologie*, 22 (1/2006): 1–11, at 1.

<sup>3</sup> For a bibliography of his Marian titles until 2000, see Leo Scheffczyk, "Die Mariengestalt im Gefüge der Theologie," in *Mariologische Studien*, vol. XIII, ed. Anton Ziegenaus (Regensburg: Pustet, 2000), 279–291. See also Leo Scheffczyk, *Crocevia della Fede Cattolica*, Edizione italiana a cura di Manfred Hauke, in *Collana di Mariologia* 1 (Lugano: EU Press, 2001), 165–179.

<sup>4</sup> Lorenz Jaeger, *Maria und die Ökumene* (Leutesdorf: Johannes, 1974), 10f. Cf. Manfred Hauke, *Ganz und gar katholisch. Ein erster Einblick in das theologische Werk von Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk* (Buttenwiesen: Stella Maris Verlag, 2003), 59f.

of Christ became increasingly diffuse and subjected to facile reinterpretations: the Word incarnate has no mother and thus evaporates into an abstract entity.<sup>5</sup> Early on, Scheffczyk diagnosed these and other grave consequences of such a reduction and attempted to spell out afresh the integral nature of the Catholic genius.

Along with the Freiburg church historian Remigius Bäumer (1918-98), the dogmatician Scheffczyk was coeditor of the most significant post-conciliar Marian dictionary: the indispensable and internationally acclaimed six-volume *Marienlexikon* (1988–1994).<sup>6</sup> It is the most comprehensive encyclopedia in its field. In addition, he authored a frequently reprinted Marian trilogy.<sup>7</sup> Together with fellow noted theologians and later cardinals, Yves

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<sup>5</sup> Thus concludes the Lutheran theologian Wilhelm Stählin, *Symbolon* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1958), 224f. Cf. Hauke, *Ganz und gar katholisch*, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Leo Scheffczyk and Remigius Bäumer, eds., *Marienlexikon*, vol. 1: AA – Chagall, 1988; vol. 2: Chaldäer – Greban, 1989; vol. 3: Greco – Laib, 1991; vol. 4: Lajtha – Oranienbaum, 1992; vol. 5: Orante – Scherer, 1993; vol. 6: Scherer – Zypresse und Nachträge, 1994 – (St. Ottilien: EOS).

<sup>7</sup> Reprinted together, Leo Scheffczyk, *Maria—Mutter und Gefährtin Christi* (Augsburg: St. Ulrich, 2003). Published separately before as: Leo Scheffczyk, *Das biblische Zeugnis von Maria. Maria in der Heilsgeschichte I* (Vienna: Rosenkranz-Sühnekreuzzug, 1979), 6th ed., 1990. Leo Scheffczyk, *Maria im Glauben der Kirche. Maria in der Heilsgeschichte II* (Vienna: Rosenkranz-Sühnekreuzzug, 1980), 3rd ed., 1992. Leo Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche. Maria in der Heilsgeschichte III* (Vienna: Rosenkranz-Sühnekreuzzug, 1981), 2nd ed., 1992.

Congar, OP (1904–95) and Alois Grillmeier, SJ (1910–98), he also edited the much lauded multi-volume *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte*.<sup>8</sup> To both series he contributed numerous entries. In collaboration with his former student and Augsburg University professor Anton Ziegenaus, he authored the eight-volume *Katholische Dogmatik*, later translated into several languages.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Leo Scheffczyk's *Vita*

Leo Scheffczyk was born on February 21, 1920, into a Catholic family in the town of Beuthen in vibrantly Catholic Upper Silesia, then a part of the short-lived and tumultuous German Weimar Republic (1919–33). There he attended a well-regarded *Humanistisches Gymnasium* from 1930 until 1938. As an eleven-year-old he joined the Catholic youth movement *Neudeutschland*. In this ambience he was brought up with an appreciation for everything original, natural, and authentic. It also instilled in him a critical distance to the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of National Socialist ideology. One of this Catholic movement's mottoes was "Christ must live in Germany, even if we must die." It was the period in history when Catholics were persecuted on account of their faith: in Mexico (*Cristeros* Uprising), in Spain (Spanish Civil War), and in the Soviet Union. During these heady days the

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Schmaus; Alois Grillmeier, SJ; Leo Scheffczyk; Yves Congar, OP, eds., *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1951–).

<sup>9</sup> Leo Scheffczyk and Anton Ziegenaus, *Katholische Dogmatik*, vols. I–VIII (Aachen: MM Verlag, 1997).

Catholic ethos was to be “counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” of Jesus (Acts 5: 41).<sup>10</sup> As head of the youth-group section of Upper Silesia (*Oberschlesiengau*) in the *Neudeutschland* movement, he led a spirited opposition to at first petty, then increasingly mean-spirited and violent Nazi reprisals, until the NS regime forcibly dissolved this Catholic youth movement. As a seventeen-year-old, he was subjected to interrogations and even condemned to house arrest. These circumstances enabled him to appreciate deeply the irreplaceable mission of the Church for the salvation of humankind. Everything “depends on the profession of faith and magnanimous self-giving in the discipleship of Christ,” he later observed.<sup>11</sup> It was in this historically unprecedented context that his vocation to the priesthood gradually matured.

In 1938, he commenced his philosophical and theological studies at the renowned Leopoldina, the University of Breslau, then located in Germany, now renamed Wrocław, Poland. Noted figures of Christian intellectual history associated with this city include Edith Stein, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There Scheffczyk experienced a harmonious collaboration between faith and knowledge, prayer and studies, wisdom and scholarship. Two different but complementary schools

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<sup>10</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, “Berufung als Ruf aus der Zeit,” in *Wen(n) Gott ruft*. 23 *Berufungsgeschichten*, ed. Michael Müller (Aachen: MM, 1997), 98–118, at 99.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

of theology were there then prominent: an Augustinian-Franciscan experiential approach, represented by Bernhard Rosenmüller (1883–1974) and a Thomistic-rational one, represented by Josef Koch (1885–1967). “Both found their terminal point in front of the mystery” of the triune God, as Scheffczyk would later recount.<sup>12</sup>

In 1941, he was conscripted into military service, first stationed in Alsace and subsequently in Norway. He worked in relative isolation in non-combat roles, since the Nazi officials deemed him politically untrustworthy. After half a year in a British, then American prisoner-of-war camp, he again took up theological studies in the then-seminary of the Archdiocese of Munich, located north in Freising. As a displaced refugee barred from returning to Silesia, he was ordained by the great Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber, Archbishop of Munich, on June 29, 1947, but remained, until his own elevation to the cardinalate, incardinated in the German Breslau Archdiocese. While in Freising seminary, he met the much younger seminarian Joseph Ratzinger.<sup>13</sup>

In November of 1948, he began lecturing theology and serving as vice-rector in the refugee seminary of Königstein, located in the Taunus Hills north of Frankfurt am Main. In

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>13</sup> As a seminarian, Pope Benedict XVI recalls Scheffczyk as an eloquent and theologically profound homilist, who was shy but endowed with considerable interiority. Still as seminarian, Ratzinger regarded him as a promising theologian. Cf. Leo Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt. Wahrheit und Gestalt mit einem Interview mit Papst Benedikt XVI*, 3rd. ed. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008 [1977]), ix.

1950, he defended his doctoral thesis titled “Friedrich von Stolberg and the Reorientation of Catholic Church Historiography in the Age of Romanticism,”<sup>14</sup> which he authored under the direction of the renowned Church historian Franz-Xaver Seppelt (1883–1956)—formerly teaching in Breslau and now likewise a deportee—at Munich University. This familiarized him with Catholicism’s reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Influenced by Romanticism, Stolberg (1750–1819) no longer perceived the Church primarily as a social, perhaps even morally edifying entity—in the *ductus* of Deism and Enlightenment, but “as a supernatural reality, concretizing itself ever again as living tradition in the unity of life and doctrine.”<sup>15</sup>

This insight occasioned Scheffczyk’s turning to dogmatic theology and earning a *Habilitation* (the German terminal degree) in 1957, with a lengthy study on “The Marian Secret in Piety and Teaching during the Carolingian Age.”<sup>16</sup> This time his director was the celebrated dogmatician Michael Schmaus (1897–1993), whom he later succeeded in Munich. This topic familiarized him with the important intersection between Antiquity and the Middle

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<sup>14</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Friedrich Leopold von Stolbergs “Geschichte der Religion Jesu Christi.” Die Abwendung der katholischen Kirchengeschichtsschreibung von der Aufklärung und ihre Neuorientierung im Zeitalter der Romantik* (München: K. Zink, 1952).

<sup>15</sup> Ziegenaus, ““Den unergründlichen Reichtum Christi verkündigen,”” 3.

<sup>16</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Das Mariengeheimnis in Frömmigkeit und Lehre der Karolingerzeit*, *Erfurter Theologische Studien*, 5 (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1959).



Ages: between the teachings of the Church Fathers and Frankish theology. Not unlike Newman (1801–90) over a century earlier, Scheffczyk examined the development of dogma and appreciated “the organic enradication of dogma in scripture and tradition.”<sup>17</sup>

In 1959, he began teaching dogmatic theology in Tübingen. From 1965 until becoming emeritus in 1985, he succeeded his teacher Michael Schmaus as professor of dogmatics at Munich University. Interestingly, coming from Münster, the young theologian Joseph Ratzinger succeeded Scheffczyk on his Tübingen chair. From 1970 until 1985, Scheffczyk advised the German Catholic Bishops’ Conference in matters of doctrine. He also contributed to the German Adult Catechism.<sup>18</sup> Among other roles: he was (since 1972) a member of the much-esteemed *Görres Gesellschaft für Interdisziplinäre Forschung*; one year later, in 1973, he was appointed member of the *Pontificia Academia Mariana Internationalis* (PAMI) and a few years thereafter was received into the *Pontificia Academia Theologica Romana* (1976). In addition, since 1980, he was also member of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences (*Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*). Following an invitation from St. John Paul II, he advised the *Pontifical*

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<sup>17</sup> Johannes Nebel, “Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk, ” (Foreword), in Leo Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt. Wahrheit und Gestalt mit einem Interview mit Papst Benedikt XVI*, xvi.

<sup>18</sup> *Katholischer Erwachsenenkatechismus*, ed. German Bishops’ Conference, vol. 1 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1985).

*Council on Family* between 1983 and 2001. In his capacity as professor of Catholic dogmatic theology at Munich's Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, he edited for quite a number of years the highly regarded periodical *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* and, as emeritus, became co-founder and co-editor of another journal: *Forum Katholische Theologie*.

In 1982, Scheffczyk enthusiastically joined as associate member the spiritual family *The Work*, headquartered in Thalbach, Austria. Both this community's foundress, Julia Verhaeghe (1910–97), and Scheffczyk valued highly the thoughts of Bl. John Henry Newman.<sup>19</sup> To the author's knowledge, Scheffczyk's scholarly accomplishments were recognized with at least two honorary doctoral degrees: from Spain (University of Navarra, Pamplona) and Poland (Oppeln).

Most fittingly, in relation to his numerous theological accomplishments in the areas of Vatican II (1962–65) and Mariology, he passed away on December 8, 2005, a Marian feast day and the fortieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Vatican Council II.

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<sup>19</sup> Scheffczyk remained a member of the Archdiocese of Breslau. *The Work*, founded in 1938 in Belgium, is also present in Ireland, Great Britain, the United States, the Benelux countries, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Israel. This international community's charism encompasses in a particular way service for the sake of the Church's unity and is composed of incardinated clergy, consecrated women, diocesan clergy, and lay people. Its web presence includes an exhaustive presentation of Cardinal Scheffczyk's bibliography: [www.thework-fso.org](http://www.thework-fso.org).

### 3. Scheffczyk's Theology in Outline

Unlike fellow cardinal-theologian Henri de Lubac (1896–1991), to Scheffczyk ‘mystery,’ a key theological term, is not a paradox, standing in diametrical opposition to human reason (cf. J. Nebel). Far from being an irresolvable riddle, the Christian mystery is grounded in “the supra-categoriality of its ontic density of meaning.” Its being does not remain completely inaccessible to humans; it is, therefore, recognizable by human reason and hence is of utmost existential relevance for human beings. The Christian mystery “releases illuminating rays from within itself. In mystery a wealth resides that both reveals and veils [divine] glory.”<sup>20</sup> Here one detects the symphonic influences of Patristic thought, Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1215–74), the Tübingen School (1810–50), and Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835–88), fusing together in the grand, stringently systematic, all-embracing thinking of Scheffczyk.

In his writings, this—at heart Silesian—theologian thematizes on a broad canvas the tension-filled unity of faith and reason, God and world, Scripture and tradition, grace and nature, faith and works, creation and redemption. His thought is much like that of one of his favorite Catholic poets, the Silesian Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff (1788–1857), who expressed the human quest for meaning thus:

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<sup>20</sup> Ziegenaus, “‘Den unergründlichen Reichtum Christi verkündigen’ (Eph 3,8),” 1. For an overview of Scheffczyk’s theology see also Alois Felder, *Wort – Strukturprinzip der Theologie: zur Theologie des Wortes bei Leo Scheffczyk*, Dissertation: Theologische Reihe, Bd. 66 (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1993).

A song sleeps in all things,  
Which dream on and on,  
And the world begins to sing,  
If only you find the magic word.<sup>21</sup>

Scheffczyk knows the Crucified and Risen Lord as the all-encompassing meaning of human existence. He discovers “a gravitation to the stronger pole, towards the divine, the absolute, to the everlasting, without suppressing the other pole,”<sup>22</sup> but rather, seeing its value precisely as originating from the Divine and intended for glorification, by magnifying God with Mary.

When the Second Vatican Council speaks of the incarnation in *Lumen Gentium*, 8, he perceives this ecumenical gathering as essentially advocating “a re-application of the [ongoing] incarnational principle.”<sup>23</sup> To his mind, the importance of the Word vis-à-vis the sacraments is underscored afresh—thereby carefully recalibrating the sacraments, so as to overcome an unreflected sacramentalism: sacraments as the very enablements of an encounter with the triune God. Mary is

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<sup>21</sup> “Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen, Die da träumen fort und fort, Und die Welt hebt an zu singen, Triffst du nur das Zauberwort.” Joseph Freiherr von Eichendorff, *Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen—Gedichte* (München: DTV, 2007), 149f.

<sup>22</sup> Ziegenaus, “‘Den unergründlichen Reichtum Christi verkündigen’ (Eph 3,8),” 4f.

<sup>23</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, “Hoffnungen und Probleme des geschichtlichen Wandels in der Kirche,” *Königsteiner Studien* 13 (1967): 1–11, at 7.

perceived as the paradigm *par excellence* for dialogue with and proper relationship between humankind and the triune God. In such a consistently Marian perspective, Scheffczyk argues, historicity—this dimension of faith constantly present in the Church but newly discovered in the 1960s—receives its proper role in spelling out the supra-historical nature of the Church as grounded equally in God's eternity and the second person of the Blessed Trinity's incarnation. Mary permits dialogue with the world to be defined *ab initio* as salutary dialogue with God, as she leads ever anew to the *Mysterion*. With Mary, Scheffczyk argues, Catholic faith can offer something truly thrilling and enriching to a world increasingly "beholden to Cartesian anthropocentrism, the merely historical and scientific."<sup>24</sup>

Consistent with this project, he showed in a collection of interdisciplinary essays that as image of God the human being discovers in Mary his true mission. This compelled Scheffczyk to develop also an original, and much discussed contribution to a theology of creation in 1975<sup>25</sup>—on the

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<sup>24</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, "Grundströmungen heutiger Theologie," *Königsteiner Studien* 17 (1971/1): 1–17.

<sup>25</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Einführung in die Schöpfungslehre* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975; 2nd ed., 1982).

bases of the post-lapsarian state of humankind and of definitive salvation offered by God.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4. Scheffczyk's Contributions to a Vatican II Mariology

In the phrase “Mary—an exponent of Catholic faith” he captures a key understanding of Vatican II: all theological vectors converge in the figure of Mary: Christology, Pneumatology, ecclesiology, anthropology, and eschatology.<sup>27</sup> This Scheffczyk restates under the traditional title of “Mary as the scepter of true faith.”<sup>28</sup> Not only is Mary “the model of virtues,” she also provides access to “the great mystery of the Incarnation” and “unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings” of Catholic faith, as Vatican II reiterates (*Lumen Gentium*, 69).

The apostolic letter *Marialis Cultus*, issued by Pope Paul VI in 1974, is for him a welcome opportunity to illumine primary truths—God and Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> This intention is heightened when St. John Paul II issued the encyclical

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<sup>26</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Die Welt als Schöpfung Gottes* (Aschaffenburg: P. Pattloch, 1968). Leo Scheffczyk, *Der Mensch als Bild Gottes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969). Leo Scheffczyk, *Wirklichkeit und Geheimnis der Sünde. Sünde—Erbsünde* (Augsburg: 1970); Eng. trans.: Leo Scheffczyk, *Creation and Providence* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Scheffczyk's Habilitation director Michael Schmaus, *Mariologie* (2nd ed., Munich: Hueber, 1961), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt*, 271, fn. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Neue Impulse zur Marienverehrung* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1974).

*Redemptoris Mater* in 1987. Both papal documents call upon Christians to turn their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. Piously meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word-made-man, the Church enters with joyful and confident reverence more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her Spouse. Ever since her entry into salvation history, Mary unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings of the faith. As she is proclaimed and venerated, she calls the faithful to her Son and His sacrifice and to the love of the Father. Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted *Typos*—Mary, and valiantly and continually progresses in faith, hope and charity, seeking and doing the will of God in all things—via the secondary Marian truth.<sup>30</sup>

Within the Hierarchy of Truths as restated by Vatican II (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11), the secondary truth of Mary enjoys a prominent role, as she occupies a singularly important position in the mystery of the incarnation and enjoys an exalted relationship with the God-man Jesus Christ. As virginal Mother her figure and her activities expand and anchor the divine-human mystery in the natural order of things. A more interior and deeper anchoring of the divine in the natural “cannot be thought”—to apply an

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<sup>30</sup> Scheffczyk, *Neue Impulse zur Marienverehrung*. Cf. Leo Scheffczyk, *Grundfragen der Christologie heute*, Quaestiones Disputatae, vol. 72 (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1975; 2nd ed., 1978).

Anselmic formula to Mary. As this relationship is not only a biological one, but is also equally determined by the order of grace and by free human volition, the mystery of human co-responsibility in the mystery of redemption shines forth in the figure of the *Deipara*. This includes the dimension of Mary's motherhood welcoming God and, by way of extension, of the Church likewise welcoming God. The character of the *communio sanctorum*, the mystery of redemption and grace, and the perfection and completion of terrestrial existence gain contours. In the case of the mystery of Mary, the truths of Catholic faith and reality become tangibly apparent. In fact, they find in the person of Mary their culminating apex.<sup>31</sup> Significantly, and in clear demarcation from ancient pagan myths of god-mothers, the *Theotokos* is accessed exclusively through the God-man; yet, at the same time vice-versa, Christ can be apprehended best via the figure of Mary.<sup>32</sup>

In the past fifty-some years, sometimes the opinion has been expressed that Marian themes occupy peripheral importance for everyday prayer-life and in theology. To such obfuscation Scheffczyk responded time and again by pointing out that the Second Vatican Council's reiteration of the hierarchy of truths (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11) by no means implies that there exist "negotiable or dispensable" truths. Quite to the contrary, the *Theotokos* is indissolubly tied to the center of salvation history, to the figure of Christ,

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<sup>31</sup> Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt*, 271f.

<sup>32</sup> Scheffczyk, *Entschiedener Glaube—befreiende Wahrheit*, 139.



and “the root sacrament” (cf. Otto Semmelroth, SJ, 1912–79) called the Church. By introducing the terminology “Mary as the exponent of the faith,” this theologian opposes the view that veneration of Mary can be placed on the same level as venerating saints in general. While venerating particular saints and neglecting others is legitimate, veneration of Our Lady is so central and indispensable for all Christians that relegating it to the disposition of the individual believer jeopardizes the very essence of faith. It runs counter to the motivation of the council fathers of the Second Vatican Council who decided to integrate, for precisely this reason, the Marian theme within the dogmatic constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), rather than devote a separate document exclusively on her. The Mother of God is not an unnecessary *adiaphoron* to faith. She stands at the beginning of the Church’s existence, and there is no other way to live out faith and be ecclesially grounded but with Mary. The central traits that distinguish Mary are the same that characterize the essence of the Church, the very ones Christians of all ages strive to imitate.

Thus it is that without Mary ecumenical dialogue becomes less joyful and confident concerning its direction. At decisive moments, throughout the centuries and in all rites, Christian liturgy consistently actuates acts of Marian veneration. Also, suggestions to distinguish between private Marian piety and the Church’s veneration of Mary lead invariably to an infelicitous *cul de sac*: the believer is unable to give account of the identity of Jesus Christ (leading to a low Christology) and of the need for membership within the root sacrament called Church (indifferentism being the attendant consequence) without the *Deipara*. In addition,

without a forceful affirmation of the divine Motherhood of Mary, the Church degenerates into a horizontalized institution.<sup>33</sup>

In distinction to the veneration of saints, Marian piety not only praises the virtues of the individual human being named Mary, but also the mysteries of Christian faith in which she plays such a pivotal role: her chosen task and extraordinary position in salvation history. “By virtue of her objective position in the saving works of Christ Jesus—unlike any other saint—Mary has entered a unique and lasting relationship with all of humankind.” Marian piety and Mariology as an academic discipline praise Mary as messenger of salvation, “as restorer of Eve ... and as universal helper.”<sup>34</sup>

Again and again, Scheffczyk does not tire to point out that Vatican II, in its dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Chapter VIII, describes Mary, deliberately and on sound theological grounds, within the context of “the mystery of Christ and the Church.” That council places into prominent position not merely the remarkable merits of Mary, but also emphasizes 1) her role in salvation history and 2) her mediating role in the personal life of every Christian.

One equally invokes Mary’s intercession and learns with her to orient one’s life toward Christ:

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<sup>33</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 6.

<sup>34</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 11.

For herself, Mary virginity's entails beyond the biological fact, the posture of exclusive self-surrender to God in Jesus Christ, which must not be distracted by a second, similar relationship to a human being. Mary's virginity is the stigma and sign of that perfect posture of receptivity, which humankind and each individual human being should own and attest to vis-à-vis ... God. The absolute sovereignty of God corresponds to Mary's absolute openness and surrender to the creator.<sup>35</sup>

Professing her virginity from the earliest texts of Christianity onward, until and including Vatican II, the Church then professes that the most sublime meaning of history and of the individual is "total commitment to Christ. It is identical with that virginity realized likewise by Mary and the Church. Both permit it to become fecund, that is, bringing forth Christ and His members."<sup>36</sup>

The typology of total, self-entrusting devotion of the woman from Nazareth intends Christian faith as total consecration to Jesus Christ. By no means can this be reinterpreted to connote something purely ideational, *à la* Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) philosophy (the ever elusive *Ding an sich*). Virginity takes on concrete physical character in Mary. First Mary needed to accept God spiritually before accepting him physically. There is an inner correspondence between spiritual and physical virginity.

The same reality applies to both the Mother of God and to the maternity of the Church. From the sacrament of

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<sup>35</sup> Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt*, 283f.

<sup>36</sup> Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt*, 284.

baptism onward every human being is ordered “permanently and supra-physically” toward Mary as Mother. As Mary offers Jesus Christ to the world, so also the Church performs this same mission since Pentecost, actuating the body of Christ whenever she celebrates the Eucharist. This Mary-Church typology is significant as it liberates Christians from apprehending the Church as “a human-rational construction, born and growing through the volition and performance of human beings.” A Church without Mary lacks its “grace-filled-mystical ground.” A Church without a Marian self-understanding is no longer mindful of possessing its origin in supernatural triune life, and, thus, “containing within herself the mystery of divine fullness.” Perceiving the Church as a merely human institution is the result of surrendering the mysteries of the divine Motherhood of Mary. Devoid of her maternal salvific essence, then the Church is reduced “to an organization serving human interests and rational utility.”<sup>37</sup>

For the scholar Scheffczyk, personal consecration to Mary is of utmost importance. In fact, it is “the most intensive form of venerating Mary.” Such consecration does not detract from the Redeemer, but rather leads to a personal acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, just as the *Theotokos* is the paradigm *par excellence* of faith-filled existence. Ergo: consecration to Mary is intimately connected to a

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<sup>37</sup> Scheffczyk, *Katholische Glaubenswelt*, 276. All quotations in this paragraph are from the same page.

deliberately lived sacramental life.<sup>38</sup> It is worthwhile noting also that St. John Paul II encouraged Christians to consecrate themselves to Mary as this leads to a more intensely lived baptismal commitment.<sup>39</sup> With the great French St. Louis Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716), Scheffczyk underscores that Mary is the fastest, surest, and perfect way to Jesus. Receiving salvation and sharing salvation with others are closely interdependent moments of the one and selfsame, joyfully lived faith. An interiorization of faith without a magnanimous Marian disposition, let alone mediation of faith without Mary's intercession, seems impossible in Scheffczyk's opinion.<sup>40</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: Scheffczyk on the Abiding Salutary Value of Mary

In Scheffczyk's Mariological texts one also senses the ardor expressed by fellow Silesian and author of the *Angelic Sojourner*, Angelus Silesius (1624–77).<sup>41</sup> This brief sketch

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<sup>38</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 41f.

<sup>39</sup> *Redemptoris Mater*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Poem under the heading in the collection *Cherubischer Wandersmann* (Angelic Sojourner) "Du musst, was Gott ist, sein." "Soll ich ein letztes End und ersten Anfang finden, / So muß ich mich in Gott und Gott in mir ergründen / Und werden das, was er; ich muß ein Schein im Schein, / Ich muß ein Wort im Wort, ein Gott in Gotte sein." In *Geistliche Gedichte, Deutsche religiöse Lyrik von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Hans-Rüdiger Schwab (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983), 90.

of Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk's contributions to a Vatican II Mariology could but highlight his central thoughts on the role of Our Lady in the faith of Christians and of the Church. Unlike the nineteenth-century dogmatician Matthias Scheeben (1835–88) who proposed the original notion of the nuptial relationship of Mary to her Son Jesus, Scheffczyk is not interested in exploring new Marian perspectives and probing novel speculative dimensions, but first and foremost his focus is on restating her central and indispensable theological and spiritual significance. Nevertheless, he does not oppose a future infallible dogmatic definition of the Mother of God under the title "Mediatrice of All Graces."<sup>42</sup>

For Scheffczyk, the figure of Mary shines luminously to an age that recalibrates the world and humankind under the joyless dictate of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-86): "Women are not born women, they become women."<sup>43</sup> These words are the consequence of a preceding decision reached by some in the wake of Enlightenment thought: "*Vivere etsi Deus non daretur.*" To the Silesian theologian, Mary is the premier antidote to a self-lost and self-enamored epoch.

Through the differentiation and life-giving balancing between the masculine-paternal principle and the feminine-maternal—[the latter] personified in Mary—the Catholic Church evidences herself today in the world as the only cultural power offering resistance to

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<sup>42</sup> Scheffczyk, *Entschiedener Glaube—befreiende Wahrheit*, 143.

<sup>43</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Random House, 2004), 37.

the destructive state of affairs leveling genders and to the again nascent pagan myth of the androgynous.<sup>44</sup>

### Such resistance

stands under the power of grace, but incorporates human beings in their complete creatureliness in the event of redemption. On the whole, the Church's Marian structure can be traced back to the principle of collaboration, the cooperation of human beings in redemption, which of course stands in contradistinction to the Lutheran principles of 'sola fide' and 'sola gratia'.<sup>45</sup>

Mary is the highest guarantee for the concretion of the divine in the creaturely, of the supernatural demand on the natural. *À la longue*, the Protestant *cantus firmus* of the *solus Christus* in fact weakens Christology, by relegating Mary to a historical footnote and denying her ongoing mediating role. This is demonstrated convincingly by looking at more recent Protestant theology: from that of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) to Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and forward: Christianity's superiority is no longer grounded in divine revelation, having occurred definitively and unsurpassably in Christ, but in positive, tangible cultural achievements. What is made out as superiority is now not theological but civilizational in nature, always subject to

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<sup>44</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 41f.

<sup>45</sup> Scheffczyk, *Maria in der Verehrung der Kirche*, 41f.

being excelled by a subsequent religion or culture.<sup>46</sup> In contradistinction, for Scheffczyk:

The woman, who was Christ's Mother, is suitable as no other divine work to intensify the enradication of divine redemption in the human and natural, to promote its concretization in the worldly and thereby to illustrate the total claim on the human [devotion to God] through God in [the work of] redemption.<sup>47</sup>

The human-personal principle, which finds expression in the collaboration of Mary, in the Marian *fiat* ... bestows on the office-principle (*Amtsprinzip*) of the Church [a much needed and, in fact, to herself essential] balance. The authoritative, [and] authorized ecclesial office, which is necessary due to its singular origin in the salvation [wrought] by Christ, receives through the humble, serving, and loving figure of Mary, so-to-speak, its [necessary and joyful] inner animation, which can [likewise] withdraw it from the temptation of [exercising] power [for its own sake] and emboss it with the character of humble service. Thus Mary proves herself as an en-souled power in the Church and ... as the spiritual, formative element in the education of the individual human being as well as of the human race.<sup>48</sup>

The differentiation of humankind into genders is an incontrovertible fact of God's creation. Over and against some self-absorbed voices in modernity, difference is not in and of itself injustice. It is a wake-up call to understand

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<sup>46</sup> Leo Cardinal Scheffczyk, *Entschiedener Glaube—befreiende Vernunft. Ein Gespräch über das Katholische und die Kirche mit Peter Christoph Dören* (Buttenwiesen: Stella Maris Verlag, 2003), 133–137.

<sup>47</sup> Scheffczyk, *Strukturen des katholischen Glaubens*, 32f.

<sup>48</sup> Scheffczyk, *Strukturen des katholischen Glaubens*, 32.



better the identity of the human being as essentially called to freedom—called by God to a joy-filled, trusting relationship with Him—and, thereby, secondarily but precisely, to authentic uncalculating relationships with fellow human beings. This call Mary realized to the fullest. Denying this central *datum* of the supernatural and natural orders not only impedes human development or endangers Christian faith, but may also lead to the destruction of all humankind. Thus, the incarnational principle of Catholic faith—as expressed also in the mystery of Mary—becomes the sole, equally intelligible and ontic principle (*seinsgemäß*) to overcome the deleterious, emancipatory pathos of the French Revolution (1789), which called for liberty without defining it. It is incapable of uncovering freedom's origin and purpose and, therefore, is equally unable of upholding the created order's inherent dignity. Scheffczyk argues that in the figure of Mary all human beings—men and women alike—recover freedom: actuated by living a relationship of joyful loyalty to the Blessed Trinity. Virginal motherhood stands for an uncalculating and unconditional freedom that completely trusts God and thereby becomes one of delight and lightheartedness, freed entirely from the post-lapsarian burden of defining, asserting, and justifying itself.

As the theologian Johannes Nebel, FSO, noted, Scheffczyk exuded a “Silesian sensitivity, originating in unfeigned personal humility and deeply rooted piety.”<sup>49</sup> One detects in all of Scheffczyk's vast theological *œuvre* a

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<sup>49</sup> Nebel, “Leo Kardinal Scheffczyk,” xxix.

pronounced Marian element. Marian devotion is capable, he once observed,

of unleashing unusually fine and tender forces which precisely through the humane fluidum surrounding the figure of Mary unite the faithful in a particularly close way to Christ; for Mary ... unfolds completely the human effulgence and luminosity of the Christ mystery. The creature Mary shines forth completely like a magnetic field of light in the glory of [her] master and redeemer, pointing and guiding to the radiant center Christ.<sup>50</sup>

### **Author Biography**

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<sup>50</sup> "... ungemein feine und zarte Kräfte zu entfalten, die den Gläubigen gerade durch das menschliche Fluidum, das die Mariengestalt umgibt, besonders eng mit Christus verbinden; denn in Maria ... entfaltet das Christusgeheimnis seine ganze menschliche Ausstrahlung und Leuchtkraft. Das ganz im Glanze seines Herrn und Erlösers erstrahlende Geschöpf Maria ist wie ein magnetisches Lichtfeld, das zum Strahlungszentrum Christus hinlenkt und hinleitet." Leo Scheffczyk, *Der Sinn des Mariengeheimnisses* (Vienna: Rosenkranz-Sühnekreuzzug, 1980), 20.

